

## **Questions and Answers**

### ***John Day Basin Draft Resource Management Plan/ Environmental Impact Statement***

**Q: What is the purpose of the BLM's John Day Basin Draft Resource Management Plan and Environmental Impact Statement (RMP/EIS)?**

**A:** The John Day Basin Draft RMP/EIS will revise and consolidate three existing RMPs that provide guidance for managing BLM administered lands within the John Day Basin. The new plan will establish broad-scale desired conditions, goals, objectives, standards, and guidelines for BLM public lands and resources within the planning area.

Specifically, the RMP will:

- 1) address all aspects of federal land management for newly acquired lands in the North Fork John Day River area;
- 2) address problems or concerns that have occurred since the completion of the previous RMPs, where these plans do not provide adequate guidance; and
- 3) address problems or concerns where guidance in the existing RMPs is insufficient or inadequate in light of current needs, demands, or new information.

The BLM Prineville District's Central Oregon Resource Area, the unit responsible for managing the lands within the planning area, must refer to three different management plans, each of which has been amended by one or more plan amendments. This new planning effort seeks to provide consistent and consolidated direction across these lands, address changes in land uses, ensure that management direction is consistent with new scientific information, and provide direction for 44,000 acres of acquired land near the North Fork John Day River currently not covered by a resource management plan.

**Q: Who will make the final decision on the John Day Basin RMP/EIS?**

**A:** The BLM Prineville District Manager and Central Oregon Resource Area Field Manager make a recommendation to the Oregon/Washington BLM State Director, who approves the Final Environmental Impact Statement, Proposed Resource Management Plan, and Record of Decision.

**Q: How large is the planning area and what Oregon Counties does it affect?**

**A:** The John Day Basin planning area consists of about 5,450,225 acres of land, which includes approximately 456,600 acres of public lands managed by the Central Oregon Field Office in BLM's Prineville District. The BLM lands within the planning area are located in Grant (156,713 acres), Wheeler (140,271 acres), Gilliam (56,748 acres), Sherman (37,930 acres), Wasco (26,402 acres), Jefferson (23,926 acres), Umatilla (11,143 acres), and Morrow (3,478 acres) counties. When approved, this plan will replace the Baker, John Day, and Two Rivers Resource Management Plans for the lands within the planning area and will guide the management of public lands administered by the Central Oregon Field Office in the planning area into the future.

**Q: Is there any direction from the old plans that will be carried forward into the new plan?**

**A:** The RMP revision will not generally result in wholesale changes of current management. For certain activities, the BLM will carry forward current management direction that has proven effective and requires no change. This direction can be found in Chapter 2 of the Draft RMP/EIS under the heading “Management Common to All Alternatives”. Examples of current objectives that will continue include, but are not limited to:

- Use existing programmatic or integrated weed management guidance until statewide guidance is available from the BLM’s *Invasive Plant and Landscape Health Management Using Herbicides on BLM Lands in Oregon Environmental Impact Statement*, which is currently being developed.
- Provide for firefighter and public safety from the effects of wildland fire.
- Provide habitat for summer steelhead and spring Chinook salmon.
- Maintain the Murderer’s Creek wild horse herd at a level that maintains an ecological balance with other resource uses, and maintains habitat in a stable or upward trend.
- Protect and enhance the outstandingly remarkable values of existing Wild and Scenic Rivers.
- Maintain the wilderness character of existing Wilderness Study Areas.
- Continue to manage the South Fork John Day River Back Country Byway.
- Meet BLM Standards for Rangeland Health and Guidelines for livestock grazing management for the States of Oregon and Washington, and maintain forage production and livestock use at levels sufficient to provide a sustained flow of local economic benefits and to protect non-market values.
- Provide diverse opportunities for dispersed motorized, non-motorized and water-based recreation in Special and Extensive Recreation Management Areas, and opportunities for commercial, competitive, educational, and organized group recreational activities.
- Create a land base that facilitates attainment of resource objectives, assure legal access to public lands with important resource values, and maintain the availability of public lands for use, occupancy, and development.

**Q: What are the key issues the draft planning document is addressing?**

**A:** The key issues in the Draft RMP/EIS are: landscape health (e.g., vegetation conditions, and fire and fuels management); access and travel management; and newly acquired lands along the North Fork John Day River. Other related management concerns include: noxious weeds, wildlife, special status species, and post-fire recovery.

Landscape health concerns include how to manage public lands to achieve healthy plant and animal communities, and where it is appropriate to allow unplanned fires to burn (wildland fire use). There are opportunities to improve sustainability and resiliency of vegetation and reduce the risk of uncharacteristic losses from insects, disease or severe wildfires. Management actions may be necessary to achieve desired conditions such as thinning forest and woodland stands to reduce densities and the use of fire to reduce the amounts and concentrations of fuels. Determining the best vegetation treatment locations and methods for meeting desired conditions is based in-part on comparing current vegetative conditions with those expected to occur within historic or acceptable ranges.

Access and travel management concerns include how the BLM should design a road system to efficiently deliver goods, people, and services across the planning area, and how the BLM

can provide opportunities for motorized recreation while protecting natural and cultural resources. Use of Off-Highway Vehicles (OHVs) and other motorized vehicles continues to increase throughout the planning area. Existing plans do not adequately address OHV riding opportunities or the impacts of widespread use by OHVs. BLM policy requires all OHV area designations to be identified at the RMP level.

Since approval of the current RMPs, BLM acquired approximately 44,000 acres of land near the North Fork John Day River through the Oregon Land Exchange Act (OLEA) of 2000. Concerns include how the BLM should manage these newly acquired lands to protect native fish, wildlife habitat, and public recreation. Management of these lands are not covered by an existing RMP. The Act directs that, "Lands acquired...within the North Fork of the John Day subwatershed shall be administered in accordance with section 205(c) of the Federal Land Policy and Management Act, but shall be managed primarily for the protection of native fish and wildlife habitat, and for public recreation." The OLEA also allows that "the Secretary may permit other authorized uses within the subwatershed if the Secretary determines, through the appropriate land use planning process, that such uses are consistent with, and do not diminish these management purposes."

**Q: What are the proposed changes to current land management and new management directions?**

**A:** The following list contains the primary changes or additions to current land management contained in the John Day Basin Draft RMP/EIS:

- Development of an interim road system and a process for developing a final transportation plan.
- Action alternatives reflect a range of Off-Highway Vehicle (OHV) options developed based on input from the public and following guidance contained in the national BLM “Off-Highway Vehicle Use on Public Lands (Strategy). All Action Alternatives will reduce the amount of Open designation from the existing situation; however, much of the area designated as Open currently is inaccessible due to steep slopes, contain riparian conditions that preclude OHV use, or is not accessible to the general public due to being “land-locked” (publicly inaccessible).
- Synthesized direction for upland and riparian health, timber and forage production, fire and fuels management and wildfire prevention.
- Direction for newly acquired North Fork John Day River lands.
- Replacement of PACFISH buffers with an Aquatic Conservation Strategy that provides guidance for more active management for riparian maintenance and recovery.
- Protection of 11,929 acres containing Wilderness Characteristics not already protected by Wilderness or Wilderness Study Area guidance.
- Use of “appropriate management response”, which includes a range of options for managing wildfires including wildland fire use, rather than full suppression of all wildfires.
- A process for identifying and reducing conflicts in grazing allotments.
- Identification of Special and Extensive Recreation Management Areas.
- Addition of new Areas of Critical Environmental Concern.

**Q: What types and amounts of vegetation treatments are proposed?**

**A:** Resource Management Plan objectives include returning vegetative community composition to within the Acceptable Range of Variability (ARV) to the extent possible on BLM lands. Objectives also include maintaining and restoring healthy rangeland, forest, and woodland habitats with diverse species compositions appropriate for the site’s potential based on disturbance patterns and frequencies, including the maintenance of native bunch grass and biological soil crust integrity. Restoration projects would also be designed to create vegetation patches with the size, shape, structural elements, extent, and spatial juxtaposition expected under endemic disturbance processes (e.g., wildland fire) and to maintain or restore connectivity of priority wildlife habitats.

Vegetation treatments would be based on one or more of the following needs to:

- Remove public health and safety hazards
- Adjust species composition, structure, or disturbance to meet ARV or restore fire regimes
- Achieve desired tree or crown densities
- Manage insect and/or pathogen disturbance
- Reduce excessive ladder fuels or achieve desired fuel loads
- Mitigate failures of Rangeland Health Standards and Guidelines attributed in part or whole to vegetative conditions
- Improve Rangeland Condition ratings

- Reduce invasive species or noxious weeds
- Reestablish native and desirable species
- Salvage dead or damaged trees

Examples of the types of vegetation management projects expected under the RMP include:

- Removing “young” juniper in areas where it exceeds ARV and is fragmenting shrub or grassland patches.
- Reducing understory “young” juniper within old growth juniper stands primarily through mechanical treatments that will not jeopardize old growth characteristics.
- Seeding annual grass or weed dominated sites that are fragmenting shrub or grassland patches.
- Reducing the amount of mesic (moist) forest species on ponderosa pine and dry-mixed conifer forests and woodlands.
- Removing competing invasive coniferous species in aspen stands, followed by prescribed fire where appropriate.

The RMP will not prescribe a specific amount of acres to treat each year because it is strongly dependent on annual budgets and staff availability, weather, and variations in site specific characteristics between project areas. However, estimated treatment types and amounts include:

Treatment Type	Action Alternatives Range <sup>1</sup> (annual acres treated (30- year total <sup>2</sup> ))	Forest (annual acres treated (30- year total))
Rx fire	2000 (60000)	300 (9000)
Mechanical	500 (15000)	1000 (30000)
Maintenance <sup>3</sup>	500 (15000)	100 (3000)
Appropriate Mgt Response <sup>4</sup>	1500 (45000)	
Yearly Totals	4,500	1,400
30 Year Totals	135,000	42,000
Current Need	146,746	50,977
% of Current Need Met in 30 Years	92%	82%

<sup>1</sup>Rangeland = grass, shrub, and juniper woodlands

<sup>2</sup>Numbers in parenthesis are yearly averages projected for 30 years.

<sup>3</sup>Maintenance will be prescribed fire entries following the first prescribed fire entry.

<sup>4</sup> This is an estimate that may range considerably from year to year. The frequency and occurrence of lightning in a given year cannot be predicted.

### **Q: Where will proposed vegetation treatments be located?**

**A:** The John Day Basin Draft RMP/EIS is largely programmatic and will not prescribe vegetative treatment projects in specific locations. The Action Alternatives would allow vegetation treatments throughout the planning area; however, the type and amount of treatment may be limited by other resource allocations.

Treatment priorities would be based on an integrated analysis of the potential multi-resource benefits of treatments in a particular area, and the Draft RMP/EIS provides a preliminary map of priority vegetative treatment areas. Treatment areas and priorities shown on Map 4 were developed based on an analysis of current vegetation conditions and their spatial relationship to other priority resource needs. These priorities would provide guidance for where treatments

should occur; however, annual funding and other priorities would be considered when making the final determination of priority treatment areas. Areas with higher scores based on the number of factors benefited would be addressed first unless funding or specific objectives are being targeted elsewhere.

Priority treatment areas were mapped in the Draft RMP/EIS based on the following criteria:

- Wildland Urban Interface (would take precedence in most situations)
- Community Watersheds
- Resource values (special wildlife habitats and presence of forest vegetation)
- Current field data indicating vegetation treatments are needed for a variety of reasons

Treatment priorities would also be based on an assessment of whether a single treatment (maintenance) can maintain progress toward ARV or whether multiple, sequenced treatments (restoration) are necessary. Maintenance treatments would generally receive higher priority than restoration treatments due to lower amounts of inputs and higher potential for success.

Additional factors that could be considered when determining project priorities during implementation include:

- Adjacent land owner interest in cooperative management or other partnerships.
- Areas where biomass or other products can be realized.
- Projects with targeted funding or resource objectives.
- Vegetation types with the furthest departure from ARV objectives.
- Treatments that restore stand conditions consistent with objectives of allowing Wildland Fire Use within an identified Wildland Fire Use area.

Reduction of juniper occupation is also prioritized where the following vegetation types are located: Mountain Big Sagebrush with Conifers, Wyoming Big Sagebrush Semi Desert with Trees, and Stiff and Low Sagebrush with Trees.

### **Q: What is ARV and PSQ?**

**A:** The “Acceptable Range of Variability” (ARV) represents the condition of vegetative communities relative to a reference baseline. Each biophysical setting (encompassing physical and biological attributes such as elevation, aspect, precipitation, and potential vegetation) has an identified range of vegetative conditions and distributions that occurred based on site potential and “pre-European” disturbance regimes. Managing vegetation toward the ARV does not mean replicating exact conditions from a selected date in the past, but rather this approach manages ecosystems for a range in, and combination of patterns, patch sizes, species distribution, and structural stages that are consistent with the site’s potential and the expected disturbance (e.g., fire) frequency, intensity, and distribution. The ARV is often broad enough to encompass social as well as ecological goals. The plan describes the ARV (vegetation composition and structure) for each vegetation type (or biophysical setting).

Probable Sale Quantity (PSQ) refers to the amount of commercial or noncommercial timber volume that would be sustained over the long term as a result of vegetation treatments. The PSQ would fluctuate annually depending on the amount of land to be treated that contains forest products, and is dependant upon the size of material and number of acres treated. Lands available for forest product production would not provide an assigned allowable sale quantity but rather a probable sale quantity (PSQ). Commercial products include sawlogs, poles, posts, firewood and other wood fiber biomass. Approximately 2.54 million board feet could be available within the planning area for every 1,000 acres of forest lands treated.

**Q: What is the difference between PACFISH and the Aquatic Conservation Strategy (ACS)?**

**A:** The broad PACFISH goals have been adapted into local Aquatic Conservation Strategy (ACS) objectives that apply to a broader set of riparian conditions than PACFISH including (wetlands and domestic water sources). PACFISH did not propose restoration or ground disturbing actions, but used a “hands-off” approach. In contrast, the ACS proposes both active and passive restoration. Under the ACS, the main objective is for streams and wetlands to attain Properly Functioning Condition.

**Q: What is the grazing matrix and how was it used?**

**A:** The primary use of the grazing matrix is to provide direction if a lessee chooses to voluntarily relinquish their lease. The grazing matrix is a tool used to identify potential conflicts between livestock grazing, ecological resources, and social values. The grazing matrix weighs these potential conflicts against demand for forage within an allotment.

If a lease is voluntarily relinquished, the grazing matrix directs management towards either making the forage available to another lessee, creating a reserve forage allotment, or leaving the allotment vacant (not authorizing subsequent grazing applications). Vacant or “closed”, allotments would not be permanently closed; plan direction would allow reauthorizing grazing if conditions or management opportunities change through time. Where leases are not relinquished, the BLM will continue to resolve conflicts by modifying use, installing projects or taking other actions.

**Q: What is BLM doing about the weeds?**

**A:** The Draft RMP/EIS provides for the treatment of noxious and invasive weeds, or maintenance or restoration treatments using preventative and direct management practices such as manual, mechanical, prescribed fire, biological, seeding, and chemical applications. BLM will continue working with Oregon counties, implementing existing National and District weed management guidance, and developing a more strategic approach to weed management after the Statewide EIS on weeds, (titled: *Invasive Plant and Landscape Health Management Using Herbicides on BLM Lands in Oregon Environmental Impact Statement*) is completed.

**Q: How will resource management affect sensitive or listed (Special Status) plants and their habitat?**

**A:** Management objectives for all RMP alternatives require BLM to conserve threatened and endangered plant species and the ecosystems upon which they depend, and to not contribute to the need to list a species. To do this, the RMP provides guidance to: a) determine the distribution, abundance, reasons for current status and habitat needs for sensitive species occurring on lands administered by the BLM and manage the habitat to conserve the species, b) maintain an active inventory and monitoring program for all Special Status species, c) consider Special Status plants prior to implementation of any BLM action, and d) involve partners to assist in writing conservation assessments and strategies and for implementing public education.

**Q: Will Wildland Fire Use threaten forage or timber resources?**

**A:** Wildland Fire Use (WFO) is the management of naturally ignited wildland fires to accomplish resource management objectives, and would generally be implemented where fire is a key natural disturbance supporting the sustainability of the ecosystem. Implementation of WFO, and the broader strategy of “Appropriate Management Response” (AMR), would be based on considerations of safety, environmental, social, economic, political, and resource management objectives, including the need to protect valuable forage and timber resources. In general, objectives for AMR, including WFO, are to maintain or increase wildlife habitat diversity and improve ecosystem integrity through development of structurally diverse plant communities, multiple seral stages and increased plant and animal species richness. Objectives also include reducing fuel levels in order to decrease the chance of extreme habitat loss through stand-replacing wildland fire, and to minimize cost and maximize resource benefit. Prior to implementing WFO, a site specific plan will be written for each area designated as a WFO area. Potential Wildland Fire Use areas to be considered include: Sutton Mountain, Pat’s Cabin, Spring Basin (in conjunction with Pine Creek Ranch), North Fork of the John Day (in conjunction with the Umatilla National Forest), South Fork of the John Day (in conjunction with the Ochoco and Malheur National Forests). Other areas may be added over time. Additionally, the Draft RMP/EIS provides guidance to identify areas needing prior treatment to increase the probability that WFO will meet management objectives.

**Q: How is Off-Highway Vehicle use in Little Canyon Mountain, near Canyon City, being addressed?**

**A:** All of the Action Alternatives designate a 2,617 acre Little Canyon Mountain Special Recreation Management Area.

The action alternatives vary in the type of access (Open, Limited, or Closed) and class of OHV (Class I, II, or III) allowed in the North and South pits and the time of day Off-Highway Vehicle (OHV) use would be allowed. All of the Action Alternatives would designate areas outside of the North and South pit as Limited to designated routes and provide varying amounts of motorized and non-motorized trails.

The preferred alternative limits OHV use in the Little Canyon Mountain area to designated roads and trails and:

- The two acre South Pit Area of Little Canyon Mountain would be limited to Class II vehicles.
- The North Pit area would serve as trailhead and parking area.
- Motorized use at Little Canyon Mountain would be limited to 9am-6pm daily.

**Q: How far off of interim routes can users travel to camp or park?**

**A:** Authorization to drive up to 100 feet off of a designated interim route is allowed for parking or camping only and is only allowed in designated locations in Wilderness Study Areas.

**Q: Where will Off-Highway Vehicle use be allowed? Can they be used to go hunting or retrieve game?**

**A:** Off-Highway Vehicle (OHV) use would be allowed on all interim routes (333 miles under the preferred alternative), and cross-country in areas designated as “Open” to OHV use (4,490



acres under the preferred alternative). Game retrieval off of designated interim routes would only be allowed in areas designated as Open to OHV use.

**Q: What will Travel Management Plans achieve?**

**A:** The Draft RMP/EIS provides programmatic alternatives for the development of an interim transportation system that would remain in effect until a final transportation system is developed. Alternatives identify aggregate surfaced roads and main collector roads that would be part of the permanent transportation system, and differ in the miles of year-round, seasonally-open, closed, and “land-locked” (publicly inaccessible) roads that would be part of the interim system. The final Transportation Management Plan (TMP) will, through a collaborative process with John Day Basin stakeholders, assess present and future access needs, and evaluate existing trails, primitive roads, and other roads within five years after a signed record of decision for the RMP and Final EIS. To provide direction for the future TMP, prescribed road densities were identified by Travel Management Area based on the need to reduce impacts to key wildlife habitats and provide access consistent with recreation management objectives. The TMP will identify, for each road in the interim network, whether to: a) keep, b) rehabilitate, c) obliterate or decommission, d) close, e) place seasonal restrictions on, f) change the use classification of, and/or g) set maintenance intensities for the road. In some cases, roads will be designed for single or shared use (i.e., motorized, non-motorized). Areas analyzed first for final transportation management planning will be those: a) with large blocks of public lands with legal public access, b) with high public demand, and/or c) not attaining resource objectives (e.g., where interim road densities are currently too high to meet wildlife objectives).

**Q: Will roads not shown as interim in Alternative 2, 4 or 5 be considered for inclusion in the final transportation system in the Transportation Management Plan(s)?**

**A:** Yes, one of the criteria contained in the action alternatives for the final transportation plan is to utilize already disturbed areas as roads and trails in the final transportation system to the extent possible while meeting other criteria. The only roads that would not be considered are those listed for hydrological closure and rerouting in the alternatives.

**Q: How will the newly acquired lands in the North Fork John Day River be managed to meet the requirements of the Oregon Land Exchange Act of 2000?**

**A:** The preferred alternative recommends the 37-mile segment of the North Fork John Day River as eligible and administratively suitable for designation by Congress as a Wild and Scenic River (WSR) with a Scenic classification. Outstandingly Remarkable Values identified for protection would be fisheries, scenery, and recreation. In addition, when implementing the grazing matrix tool, the NFJDR acquired lands would be treated as a Special Management Area similar in ecological value to Wilderness Study Areas, Wild and Scenic Rivers, Research Natural Areas, and Areas of Critical Environmental Concern. The nine, currently vacant grazing allotments containing acquired lands in the NFJDR would be treated as having voluntarily relinquished lessees and the grazing matrix results would determine the proposed use. Two of the nine allotments containing acquired lands in the NFJDR would be either closed or available as Reserve Forage Allotments, and seven would remain unavailable for grazing use. Off-Highway Vehicle use in the NFJDR area would be limited to designated roads and trails, and some routes would be identified for closure due to hydrologic concerns.

**Q: What direction in the plan will lead to actions on-the-ground as opposed to**

## **programmatic direction?**

**A:** The John Day Basin Draft RMP/EIS will largely establish programmatic objectives and guidance for managing lands within the planning area. In some cases, the RMP will provide specific stipulations to be considered during project implementation, such as where mineral and energy development may or may not be developed with surface disturbing methods. Project specific, implementation level guidance will generally not be addressed in the Draft RMP/EIS. However, the Draft RMP/EIS does provide guidance for the development of a handful of specific projects such as campgrounds or road closures along the North Fork John Day River, about 20 acres of recreational gold panning opportunities, creation of an approximately 41 mile Sutton Mountain Back Country Byway, and signs, parking barriers, and campground to protect vegetation on the South Fork John Day River.

## **Q: How will the plan address climate change?**

**A:** On-going scientific research has identified the potential impacts of “greenhouse gas” emissions (including carbon dioxide (CO<sub>2</sub>); methane; nitrous oxide; water vapor; and several trace gasses) on the global climate. Although greenhouse gas levels have varied for millennia (along with corresponding variations in climatic conditions), recent industrialization and burning of fossil carbon sources have caused CO<sub>2</sub> concentrations to increase dramatically, and are likely to contribute to overall climatic changes, typically referred to as global warming. Increasing CO<sub>2</sub> concentrations also lead to preferential fertilization and growth of specific plant species.

Exactly how diverse plant and animal species will respond to climate change and at what rate is unclear, particularly since the planning area lies largely at mid- and lower elevations. Changes in timing of bird migration and nesting, insect hatching and development, green-up and other spring events are well documented both in the U.S. and globally. Cool season plant species’ ranges could potentially move north due to the potential loss of habitat, or from competition from other species whose ranges shift northward, and the population of some animal species could change. Applying existing climate change models to a finer scale than the entire Pacific Northwest in a meaningful and accurate manner would be very difficult. Due to the immense number of factors involved it is currently unknown how changes in climate will specifically alter fundamental ecological processes at the scale of the John Day Basin.

Many of the models needed to make effective decisions at the local and regional levels have not been developed. When further information on the impacts to climate change is known, such information would be considered in the implementation of this plan, as appropriate.

## **Q: How could implementation of this plan affect local economies?**

**A:** At the John Day Basin planning scale, none of the Draft RMP/EIS alternatives would be expected to reduce economic diversity (the number of economic sectors) or increase economic dependency, which occurs when the local economy is dominated by a limited number of industries. While the alternatives have the potential to affect local businesses and individuals, the relative contribution of BLM related activities to the local economy and the relative differences between the alternatives would not be large enough to have any measurable effect on economic diversity or dependency. This is also the case with respect to economic and social well-being, which can be assessed in terms of changes in income, employment and the season of employment, and population.

The vegetative treatments proposed under all alternatives would tend to reduce the occurrence and intensity of wildfire events. These treatments are expected to reduce the severe levels of tree mortality and site damage that are experienced during large scale, stand replacement events, and would reduce the amount of salvage volume available from such events in the future. The treatments, which intend to reduce the severity of wildfire events, would also supply future forest products, helping to sustain economic conditions.

The existing management and proposed alternatives would sustain current local government revenues from forest product sales within the area. If Probable Sale Quantity estimates were achieved, revenues received by counties would likely increase. To the extent practical, the preferred alternative would allow for the entry of new business that might offer value added products (such as log homes or furniture) or biomass energy. These nontraditional materials have sometimes been considered low value forest materials; however, industries could develop in the region that would utilize these products more efficiently.

The relatively low level of economic dependency on BLM forage would continue under all of the Draft RMP/DEIS alternatives. BLM would provide a maximum of approximately two percent and a minimum of just under one percent of total forage needed to feed livestock in the plan area. Jobs and labor income associated with grazing would continue to account for less than one percent of area totals (in both the smaller Gilliam, Grant and Wheeler area and the larger eight county area).

While economic dependency would remain low, we can reasonably assume BLM forage would continue to provide a low cost and important complement to some livestock producers' grazing, forage, and hay production.

The role of recreation in the local economy will continue to increase as Off-Highway Vehicle use, boating and other forms of recreation continue to increase. While there are no differences anticipated as a result of the alternatives, recreation actions would sustain use levels important to the area economy and well-being.

**Q: How will the plan effect recreation opportunities?**

**A:** The level and type of public recreation access would vary across the planning area based on the settings for each of five Special Recreation Management Areas. Under the Action Alternatives, 293,397 acres, encompassing 64 percent of public lands in the plan area would be designated as Special Recreation Management Areas (SRMAs) and managed for specific motorized and non-motorized recreation opportunities or experiences. This would result in more locations and acres available for visitors than exists currently for motorized or non-motorized trails.

A variety of designated routes and trails is expected to enhance the quality of visitor opportunities and experiences and also help meet future demand for non-motorized and motorized use over the long term. Designated routes and trails would be developed to help reduce user conflicts through separation of motorized and non-motorized uses in some areas, and provide separate and combined use on designated routes and trails in other areas.

Motorized vehicle opportunities would be enhanced for most Off-Highway Vehicle (OHV) users due to designated Class I (vehicles less than 50 inches wide with more than 3 wheels) and Class III (motorcycles) trails, and management of OHV Class II (vehicles more than 50 inches wide) routes. OHV Class II routes would be allowed and managed for on public lands classified

as Middle Country, Front Country, or Rural. These three recreation settings allow for motorized and non-motorized access and would provide diverse motorized and non-motorized trail and route opportunities. However, under the action alternatives opportunities for cross-country OHV use would be limited to areas designated as Open to cross-country travel (ranging from 0 to 5,088 acres with the Preferred Alternative providing 4,490 acres).

BLM would continue to manage river use in all John Day River segments according to the 2001 BLM Record of Decision for the John Day Wild & Scenic River Management Plan. Upland recreation opportunities on BLM lands within the John Day River canyon would continue to provide quality hiking, hunting, photography, and backcountry navigation opportunities. The quality of these river based recreation opportunities would be the same under all alternatives. All alternatives would also carry forward the existing developments on BLM managed lands. Existing developments along the main-stem of the John Day River would continue to support river and land-based recreation use on BLM lands and would continue to be governed by the John Day Wild and Scenic River Management Plan. These existing developments would continue to support existing and future river recreation use, enhancing water-based and upland recreation opportunities within this river corridor.

Opportunities for non-motorized use would continue to be available in all Wilderness Study Areas (WSAs) and areas having Wilderness Characteristics. These areas would provide diverse, non-motorized recreation opportunities such as rafting, canoeing, big game hunting, wildlife viewing, and photography. Opportunities for motorized activities would continue to be unavailable in the lower John Day, Spring Basin and Pat's Cabin WSAs, and motorized opportunities would continue to be very limited (approximately two miles) in the Sutton Mountain WSA. Areas having Wilderness Characteristics, totaling 11,929 acres under the action alternatives would provide upland non-motorized recreation opportunities. However, currently there are no existing motorized roads or trails on these public lands.

**Q: When and why would Wilderness Study Area contingency decisions take effect?**

**A:** The following Wilderness Study Areas (WSAs) are located within the planning area: Aldrich Mountain, Strawberry Mountain, Spring Basin, North Pole Ridge, Thirtymile, Lower John Day, Sutton Mountain, and Pat's Cabin. Under all alternatives, WSAs are managed following the "Interim Management Policy (IMP) for Lands Under Wilderness Review" (BLM 1995). However, under the Action Alternatives, in the event that a WSA is released by Congress for other uses, the IMP would no longer apply to these lands and the BLM would allocate these released lands in one or more ways, including: a) designating them as an Area of Critical Environmental Concern; b) managing them under no-surface-occupancy requirements for fluid mineral development and closed to wind development to protect their scenic value; c) continuing their closure to motorized vehicle use except for administrative use, or limiting motorized use to signed, designated roads and trails; d) considering them for grazing use; and/or e) changing the Visual Resource Management (VRM) Class from VRM Class I to VRM Class II.

**Q: Are areas managed for Wilderness Characteristics the same as a Wilderness Study Areas?**

**A:** Areas managed for "Wilderness Characteristics" are different from Wilderness Study Areas (WSAs). Existing plans did not identify nor provide guidance for lands outside of WSAs that nonetheless provided naturalness, and the opportunity for solitude and primitive, unconfined

recreation. For the John Day Basin RMP effort, the BLM reviewed and updated the wilderness inventory for all public lands outside of designated WSAs, including the BLM lands contained in 13 citizens' wilderness proposals. Under all Action Alternatives, the BLM would manage 11,929 acres of lands possessing Wilderness Characteristics: a) as Visual Resource Management Class II and rights-of-way exclusion areas, b) closed to construction of new buildings and new temporary or permanent roads, c) available for mining operations provided that the proposed use would not impair Wilderness Characteristics, d) under no-surface-occupancy requirements for fluid mineral development and close to wind development, e) closed to certain commercial permits (e.g. forest products and decorative stone sales), f) Off-Highway Vehicle Closed or Limited to designated routes. Proposed projects such as fuels treatments, noxious weed control, riparian or wildlife habitat improvements, wild horse management, livestock improvements and commercial recreation would be evaluated on a case-by-case basis to ensure that any reductions in Wilderness Characteristics are temporary, and to protect Wilderness Characteristics over the long term.

**Q: Will the plan impact mineral, energy, oil or gas leasing?**

**A:** Special management areas (Areas of Critical Environmental Concern, Wild and Scenic Rivers, etc.) have been recommended for withdrawal. Appropriate stipulations and Best Management Practices will be included in site specific leases.

**Q: Will Wild and Scenic River designation impact private lands along the North Fork of the John Day River?**

**A:** The Federal Government has no authority to regulate or zone private lands under the Wild and Scenic River Act. Land use controls on private lands are solely a matter of state and local regulations.

**Q: What are the primary effects of Wild and Scenic River designation?**

**A: Wild and Scenic River** designation seeks to maintain and enhance a rivers current condition and provide for public use consistent with retaining those values. The designation prevents any new dams, federally funded water resource development projects that might adversely affect river values.

**Q: How will BLM implement and enforce new direction in the RMP/EIS?**

**A:** The BLM will be completing an implementation plan with input from partners and stakeholders that will address methods, priorities, and timelines for implementation after the Record of Decision is completed. Please contact the BLM Prineville District if you would like to participate in discussions relative to the implementation plan.

**Q: How can I provide my comments?**

**A:** The BLM Prineville District will be seeking public comments on the Draft RMP/EIS throughout the 90-day comment period that begins on October 31, 2008 and runs through January 28, 2009. Comments can be submitted by mail to: BLM Prineville District Office, John

Day Basin RMP/EIS, 3050 NE Third Street, Prineville, OR 97754; email to John\_Day\_Basin\_RMP@blm.gov; [on-line](#) or, in person at one of the following public meetings:

November 12 Forest Grove, Forest Grove Senior Center, 2037 Douglas Street, 6:00-8:00 pm  
November 14 Bend, Bend High School Cafeteria, 230 NE 6<sup>th</sup> Street, 6:00-8:00 pm  
November 18 Fossil, Fossil Middle School Gym, 404 Main Street, 6:00-8:00 pm  
November 19 Mitchell, Mitchell High School Cafeteria, 340 SE High Street, 6:00-8:00 pm  
November 20 John Day, The Out Post Restaurant, 201 West Main Street, 5:00-8:00 pm

**Q: What is a substantive comment?**

**A:** Substantive comments do one or more of the following:

- Question, with reasonable basis, the accuracy of information in the Draft RMP/EIS.
- Question, with reasonable basis, the adequacy of, methodology for, or assumptions used for the environmental analysis.
- Present new information relevant to the analysis.
- Present reasonable alternatives other than those analyzed in the DEIS.
- Cause changes or revisions in one or more of the alternatives.

Comments that are *not* considered substantive include the following:

- Comments in favor of or against the proposed action or alternatives without reasoning that meet the criteria listed above (such as “we disagree with Alternative Two and believe the BLM should select Alternative Three”).
- Comments that only agree or disagree with BLM policy or resource decisions without justification or supporting data that meet the criteria listed above (such as “more grazing should be permitted”).
- Comments that don’t pertain to the planning area or the objectives (such as “the government should eliminate all dams,” when this issue is outside the scope of the planning effort).
- Comments that take the form of vague, open-ended questions.

[Examples](#) of substantive comments.